

# Living with Diabetes

If you're the parent of a child with juvenile diabetes, there are additional steps you can take to ease the stress and confusion for your child and for yourself at the beginning of a new school year. While every child and school is unique, these guidelines should help you get started.

- **Do your homework**

Before you meet with staff at your child's school, you'll need to get organized and do a little research. You should not assume that the school will know how to provide the best care for your child even if there are other students with diabetes in the school. Before you meet with staff at your child's school — ideally, before the beginning of the school year, although it's never too late — you'll need to get organized, and perhaps do some research on your child's rights and Section 504 plans. Look through the new publication from the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP): Helping the Student with Diabetes Succeed: A Guide for School Personnel and download or order copies for your child's school.

- **Meet with School Staff**

The most important thing to do is contact the school before classes start. Speak to the principal, any teacher the child will have, the gym, PE or coaching staff, school nurse and cafeteria manager. This meeting is usually the best time to go over your proposed 504 plan or other health plan, and distribute informational materials about your child and juvenile diabetes. The child may also be a part of this meeting.

- **Develop your strategy**

After you've spoken with the school, you should have a clearer idea of what you need to do to prepare your child for their day-to-day activities. Many parents prepare snack and supply "kits" for the classroom teachers, school nurse, coaches, etc. In your kit, you might want to provide syringes, pump insertion sets, a glucose monitor, lancet needles, and snacks. You could also provide baggies of high carb snacks already counted out. For example, 10 to 20 baggies with 15 Skittles per baggie, which equals a 1 carb snack. And don't forget to include a glucagon kit.

Your child may also want to prepare a presentation for the class in order to help the other students understand what diabetes is. Other children with diabetes may not be comfortable with such attention from classmates. Develop a communication plan with the school, particularly for emergencies, but also for daily issues and concerns. Make sure that all those responsible for your child know who to call, and when, and that they have the appropriate contact numbers.

- **Stay involved**

An ongoing, open relationship between you, your child and the school is vital to your child's well being throughout the year. Do everything you can to create the best possible environment for your child. In some schools, increased awareness about juvenile diabetes may spark the students' and teachers' interest in fundraisers and other activities to help find a cure for the disease.

*Adapted from the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International*